

1. "Why Should We Study the Bible?"

2 Tim 3.14-17, Psalm 119, other passages.

2 Tim 3 ¹⁴ Continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Paul is in prison, facing execution. In preparation for his death, he has left Timothy in charge of his ministry and the churches he has started.

These churches face a maze of teachings, some based on half-understandings of the gospel, others completely false, many contradictory. It is a confusing time.

Paul equips Timothy with several truths that can help him navigate Paul's churches safely through the maze.

FIRST, he tells Timothy to stay grounded in the foundational teachings he received. He knew that the people from whom he learned these things (Timothy's grandmother and mother; Paul himself) were reliable and genuine.

If your foundation is true, DON'T SHIFT FROM IT.

Having a solid, reliable foundation is essential, because everything is built on top of it. Pressure exposes weaknesses.

SECOND, Paul describes to Timothy the nature and purpose of the Bible.

1. He says that the Bible can give people wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ. This is the first and central purpose of scripture: to guide us into a relationship with God through a commitment to his son.

Compare this Rom 10.17, "Faith comes from hearing the message, & the message is heard through the word of Christ."

2. Paul says that scripture is “God-breathed.” This points back to Genesis 2, where God created Adam and breathed into him to give him life. The point is that the Bible is not just words or wisdom, it is ALIVE.

3. Paul says that scripture serves God’s purpose in the lives of his people by doing four things:

A. The Bible teaches them, giving them the information and direction they need to find God and live the lives he wants them to live.

B. The Bible rebukes them, showing them where they’ve gone wrong.

Compare James 1.22-25:

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.²⁵ But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.”

James here describes the Bible as a mirror for examining the readers’ lives and actions. This is a rabbinic idea; the Bible is a mirror that can show us the truth about our lives, and the flaws in our actions, attitudes, and thoughts.

Compare also Hebrews 4.12:

“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

The writer of Hebrews says here that scripture is like a razor-sharp blade that cuts through motivations and rationalizations and shows us our true motives, true character, the “thoughts and attitudes of [our] hearts.”

C. The Bible corrects them; think of the image of picking up someone who has fallen and putting them back on their feet, headed in the right direction.

Compare Psalm 119.105, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

D. The Bible trains them, so that their character and actions (inside and out) are what they need to be.

Compare 1 Cor 10.11-12:

“These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. 12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!”

Paul here says that the stories in the Old Testament of Israel’s relationship with God were given to Christians as examples and warnings.

Read perceptively, these stories can help us understand our attitudes and motivations, the deficits in our hearts. Then, with prayer and humility, we can grow in discipline and character.

Compare also Deut 17.18-20:

“18 When he (a new king) takes the throne, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. 19 It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees 20 and not consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.

4. Back to the main text (2 Timothy 3), specifically verses 16-17, where Paul makes his conclusion.

I said above that the first and central purpose of scripture is to guide us into a relationship with God through a commitment to his son.

But there is a secondary purpose of scripture, the way that it works in the lives of God’s people. Paul says that it benefits them by making them “thoroughly equipped for every good work,” i.e., developing in them everything that they need to perform the tasks that God has planned for them.

Other texts to consider:

Psalm 1.1-3

Psalm 19.7-11

Psalm 119.97-104